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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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Statement

The Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (the Platform) is an umbrella organisation representing over 50 affiliated organisations from the voluntary and community sectors, trade unions, statutory organisations and faith groups. The Platform aims to ensure the voice of women in Northern Ireland is heard in the debates at local, regional, national, European and international levels on the issues affecting their lives.

We welcome the opportunity offered by CSW for governments and NGOs to discuss two important thematic issues at the 49th session for the following reasons:

- to review what has been achieved through implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly;

- to identify the continuing obstacles to the advancement and empowerment of women and girls and agree on actions to tackle these.

The Platform's review of government reports on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly show that some governments have striven to achieve rapid change. Others have either been slow to take action or, worse, have regressed on their commitment to implementation.

A deep chasm is appearing between countries with regard to implementation. Without action this will continue to deepen.

In order to move forward the Platform makes the following recommendations:

1. The Platform urges **all** Member States to agree on clear time-bound targets to achieve the implementation of the Platform for Action.

2. The Platform urges **all** Member States to report achievement in the advancement of women by not just listing policy changes but also by showing evidence of outcome.

3. The Platform urges relevant Member States to also assess how implementation takes place, region by region.

4. The Platform urges **all** Member States to consult annually with the relevant NGOs on the implementation of equality of opportunity for women and report to the Division for the Advancement of Women.

5. The Platform urges CSW to identify policies by Member States that can be used as models of good practice.

6. The Platform urges **all** Member States to demonstrate through training that gender equality is essential, not only from a human rights perspective but also in order to make a positive contribution to each country's social, economic and political advancement of women and girls.

7. Given that not one country has implemented fully the 12 critical areas which were identified by the Beijing Conference in 1995, the Platform urges the CSW to strongly reinforce the need for a positive approach by **all** Member States to fully implementing the Platform for Action and the outcome document.

To move forward we must look back and the 49th Session of the CSW should aim to record what has been achieved and by which Member States, what still needs to be done and by whom, and how best this can be done within a particular time frame.